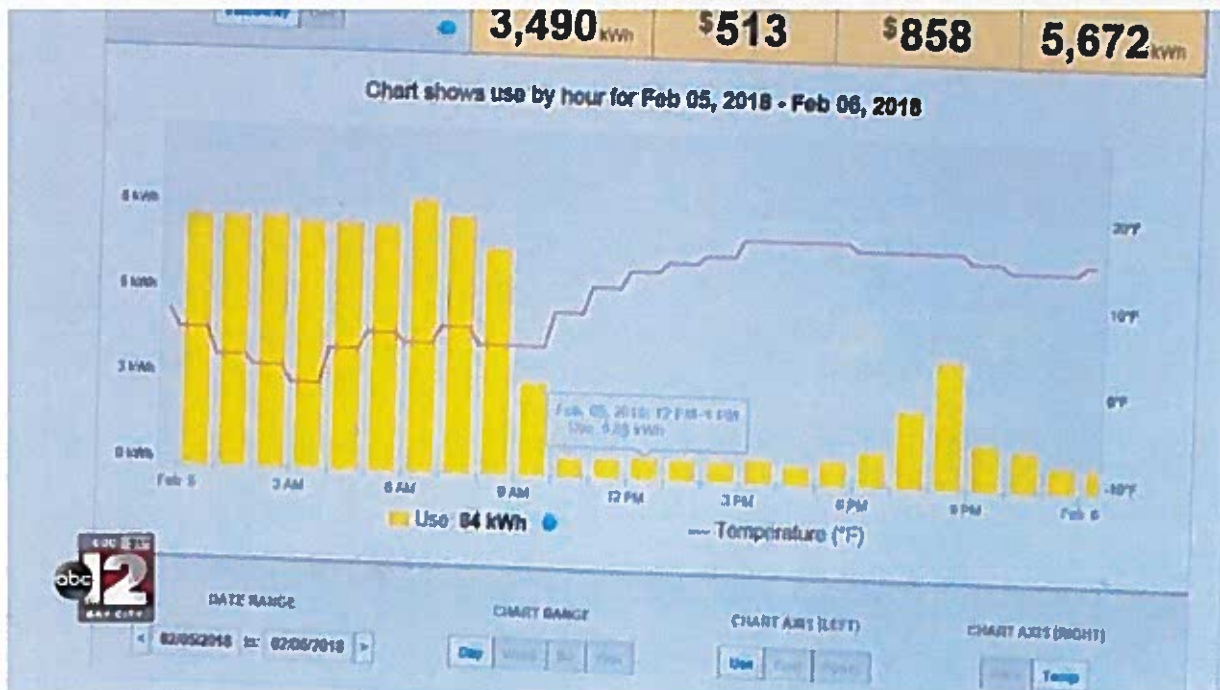


## Consumers Energy disagrees with Sanford man's concerns about smart meter



By Terry Camp | Posted: Mon 6:48 PM, Feb 12, 2018

**SANFORD (WJRT) (2/12/2018)** - After Jeremy lafrate racked up more than \$1,700 in electric bills in two months, the Sanford resident took issue with the smart meter Consumers Energy installed last summer.



Jeremy lafrate says this live metering on the Consumers Energy website shows his electric usage plummeted after a utility crew visited on Feb. 5.

Two weeks later, the utility has sent technicians to his house twice and given the smart meter a clean bill of health. But lafrate is still suspicious.

He is one of hundreds of people concerned after their combined electric and gas bills skyrocketed for December and January. Consumers has said that is a result of the brutally cold weather around Mid-Michigan in late December and early January.

But lafrate pointed out he typically paid \$250 a month in the winter until this year, when his bill tripled to more than \$700 in December and quadrupled to more than \$1,000 in January.

The first Consumers crew to visit lafrate's house in late January advised him to unplug an older model refrigerator. They returned on Feb. 5 to see if that helped.

"They said that the fridge they had me unplug didn't do anything, it didn't change the energy usage at all and they were kind of stumped," lafrate said.

However, he noticed after the crew left on Feb. 5 that his electrical usage dropped dramatically. He logged into his Consumers account online and noticed the near-constant 8 kilowatt-hour real-time readings had disappeared.

"The meter started to read what seems to be appropriately," lafrate said. "I don't know if they had adjusted something or they recalibrated something or what."

A Consumers Energy spokesman said the utility's crew tested the smart meter and it was working fine. The company plans on doing an energy audit on the home to see if that helps explain the bills.

lafrate is paying the natural gas part of his bills, but the company says he doesn't have to pay electric for now. He said he is doing everything he can to lower his bill.

"I don't think it will make much of a difference at all," lafrate said. "I do feel it's the meter still, but getting them to admit to it is going to be a whole different ballgame."